

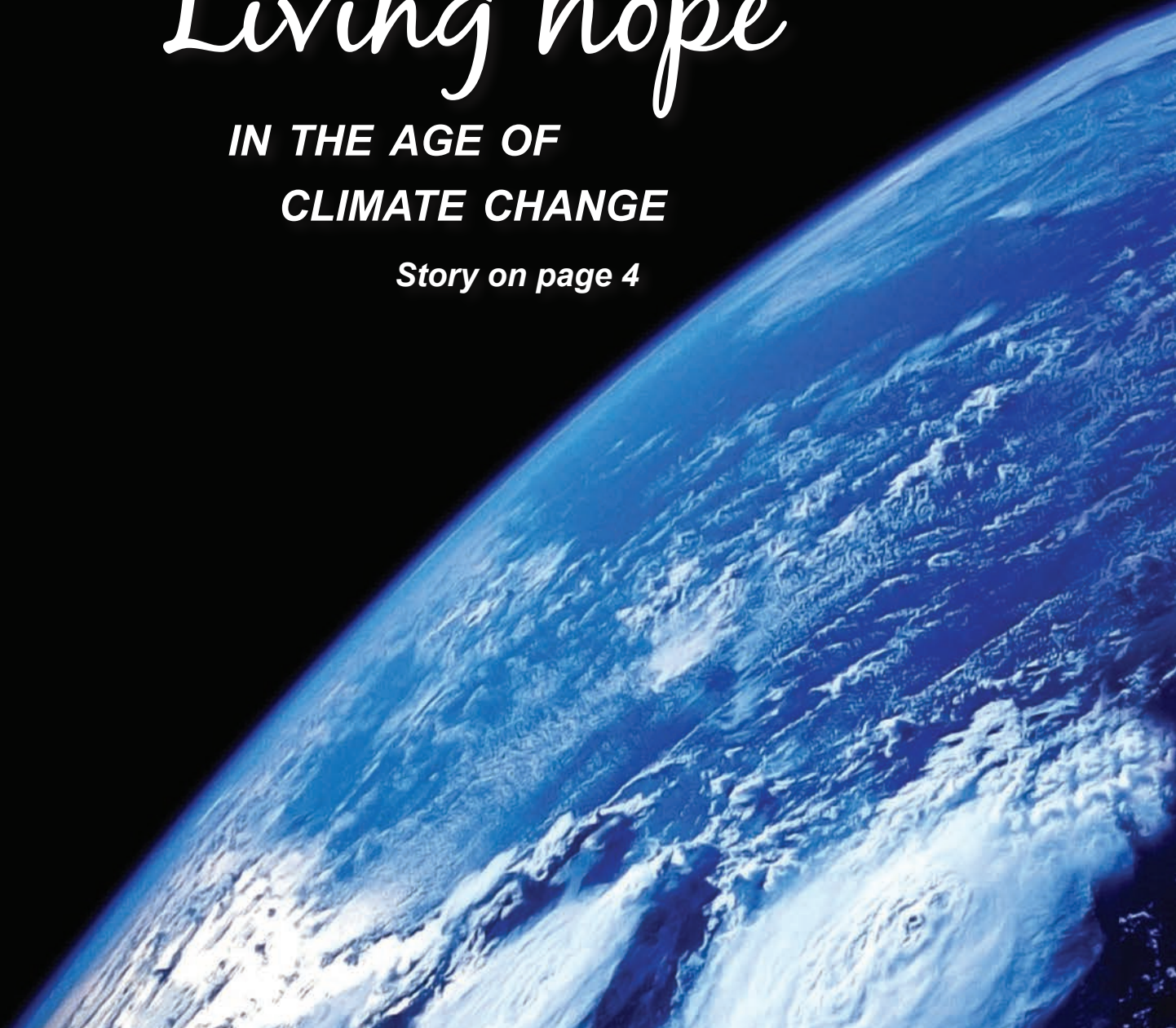
SCARBORO missions

January-February 2015 \$1.00

Living hope

**IN THE AGE OF
CLIMATE CHANGE**

Story on page 4



Dear friend of
Scarboro Missions...

Thank you for your faithful
prayers and generosity to us.
We will continue to be good
stewards of all your gifts as we
put ourselves at the service of
others.

We welcome enquiries about Scarboro's
mission programs. Please contact:
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Carolyn Doyle (laity):
lmo@scarboromissions.ca

CORRECTION: In our Nov-Dec 2014 issue, we identified
lay missionary Paulina Gallego's photos of the Sisters of
Charity daycare as located in New Amsterdam, Guyana.
The daycare is in the city of Georgetown.



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and in Canada. Founded in Canada in 1918 by Fr.
John Fraser, Scarboro's initial purpose was to train
and send missionary priests to China. Forced to leave
China after the Second World War, Scarboro began
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"Standing among hundreds of thousands of people, I expected to feel quite
small and lost, when in reality I felt larger and more confident than I had ever
felt before. It's amazing what the power of solidarity can do. One of the most
memorable moments for all of us was the moment of silence. At 12:58 pm the
streets fell quiet, with the only sounds coming from the subways below us.
Hundreds of thousands of people put their fist in the air and waited in silence.
At 1:00 pm, cheers erupted from the back of the march and, like a tidal wave of
hope, hit us and continued towards the front. It was the most amazing experi-
ence of my life." —Kate Maione, a student at St. Francis Xavier University (StFX),
Antigonish, Nova Scotia, at the People's Climate March. NYC, Sept. 21, 2014.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



By Kathy Gillis

Called to action

We begin this new year with a special issue on climate change. I wish
to thank all the contributors for presenting this complex issue in an
understandable and hope-filled way. It is easy to feel overwhelmed
and defeated by the magnitude of the climate crisis and its impact on all life,
especially on the poorest and those least responsible for the situation and least
equipped to adapt.
But that is not who we are. This issue will remind us that we are people of
faith, people who come from a deep well-spring of spiritual wisdom and teaching
that speak to us of the magnificence of God whose Divine Spirit lives in and can
be seen in all that God has created. Kathy Murtha and Mark Hathaway's articles
help us to reconnect to that deeper understanding of the sacred and to deepen
our compassion for all living things. We are encouraged to reflect on the truth
that we are part of this incredible web of life and to truly understand that, as
Chief Dan George says, "we are as much alive as we keep the Earth alive."
Karen Van Loon writes that the window for action to limit the extent of cli-
mate change is rapidly closing. Monica Lambton tells us that the scientists have
done their part in confirming the problem; now we must do our part. You will
read about people who are fasting each month to bring about change; about the
hundreds of thousands who joined the People's Climate March in New York and
the people in 160 countries who marched in solidarity with them. You will learn
about some of the many organizations and resources available to connect and
equip us for this task, and how we can urge our political leaders to take courage-
ous action.
Together we can stop climate change. As Christians, if we truly love God and
can recognize God in all creation, can there be any other response?∞

Important changes to Scarboro Missions magazine

In 2015, Scarboro Missions will publish only four issues, including the magazine
calendar issue. The May/June edition, usually devoted to the work of Our Lady's
Missionaries, will no longer appear. However, the Sisters will have opportunities to
share their ministries in articles in other editions. As well, beginning with the November-
December 2014 issue, we are providing each issue free online in PDF format. Visit our
website at www.scarboromissions.ca
Scarboro is entering a time of change and transition as our members get older and
fewer in number and our overseas mission presence lessens. At our last Chapter meet-
ing in the summer of 2012, there was much discussion about our future years and how
that transition should take place. We pray to be open to the Holy Spirit as we discern
how best to continue to support the work of mission both overseas and in Canada
through our ministries such as the Office of Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation,
the Department of Interfaith Dialogue, the Mission Centre, and the magazine.
We thank you for your continued support and prayers as we journey into the future
while faithfully serving the mission of Jesus Christ.

We belong
to an
interdependent
community of life
on Earth.

Our actions affect the Earth's ability
to sustain life. God ever invites us to
"choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19),
to restore right relationships, and to
choose a way of life based on solidarity
and sufficiency rather than exploitation
and excess. We believe God intended
the human family to use wisely and dis-
tribute justly the bounty of God's Earth
so that all people may live with dignity
both now and in the future, and so that
the community of life may flourish.
Deep gratitude to God for the wonder
of creation and the precious gift of life
moves us to consistent action.

"I have come that they may have life
and have it to the full" (John 10:10).
Jesus Christ lived simply and showed
the way of life and love, service and
sacrifice. We desire to follow Jesus
more closely and trust in the creative,
redeeming, and sustaining love of God.
Scarboro Missions seeks: to live sim-
ply and more sustainably in solidarity
with the poor and marginalized peoples
of the world as well as with the whole
community of life; and to work on
behalf of social and ecological justice.

Excerpted from Scarboro Missions'
Ecological Statement.

Living hope in the age of climate change

The time has come to heed the words of Pope Francis and deepen our vocation as protectors of creation... protecting people and the environment

By Karen Van Loon

During his inaugural homily, Pope Francis called us to live out our shared responsibility so needed at this time—the vocation of being a protector. “It means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world,” the Pope said. “It means respecting each of God’s creatures and respecting the environment in which we live. It means protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need...”

This is a good time for us to deepen this vocation. We have reached a turning point—a rapidly closing window for action to limit the extent of climate change. A decisive moment is coming up in December 2015 when countries will gather in Paris for the United Nations Conference on Climate Change. The goal is to produce a new global agreement to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that are changing the Earth’s climate and threatening devastating consequences related to extreme weather, sea level rise, declining crop yields, loss of biodiversity, and more. It will take time to make the necessary changes to the economy, to energy sources, and to our way of life. The longer we wait the fewer, riskier, and costlier the options become for dealing with climate change.

We are all in this together but we are not all affected equally. Those who have done the least to cause climate change also generally suffer the most from its consequences—plants and animals facing extinction, future generations, as well as poor and marginalized peoples who lack the resources to

adapt. There is growing realization that actions to limit and adapt to climate change are crucial to the work of ending poverty and hunger. It will take a moral and spiritual transformation so that we prioritize the protection of the environment and of people, especially those in need. Some people are already on that path, starting to make changes and work together, hoping to leave a healthier rather than diminished world for future generations.

Some events can awaken us to our vocation as protectors. In November 2013, Super Typhoon Haiyan devastated the Philippines, killing thousands, destroying homes, and pushing about half a million people into poverty and more people already poor into deeper poverty. While any one weather event cannot be attributed to climate change, a warming sea and rising sea level contributed to the unprecedented force and destruction of Typhoon Haiyan.

Philippine climate commissioner Nadarev “Yeb” Saño was at the UN climate conference in Warsaw while his own family was caught in the dis-

aster. He gave a moving speech calling for urgent action on climate change to “prevent a future where super typhoons are a way of life,” saying he would not eat until a meaningful outcome was in sight at the conference.

Hundreds of people around the world began fasting in solidarity with him. The Fast for the Climate has since grown into a global movement of young people, environmentalists, people of faith, and others who fast once a month to call world leaders to take more urgent action on climate change. This is one way people are coming together and living out the vocation of being a protector.

What is happening?

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an international scientific body set up by the United Nations to assess climate change, recently issued a Fifth Assessment Synthesis Report. The report highlights that climate change is already causing impacts “on all continents and across the oceans.” Without more efforts to limit climate change, the report emphasizes that “warming by the end of the 21st century will lead to high to very high risk of severe, widespread, and irreversible impacts globally,” affecting both people and ecosystems.

One important good news item in the report—we still have time to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, if we act quickly. We need to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By the end of this century, world emissions have to fall to near zero.



Survivors of Typhoon Haiyan in Tacloban City, Philippines. A warming sea and rising sea level contributed to the typhoon’s unprecedented force and destruction. Photo credit: Caritas Internationalis

Since the 2009 Copenhagen Accord and as part of the global effort to address climate change, most countries have agreed to the goal of limiting the global average temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and to consider an even lower limit of 1.5 degrees. So far, country commitments are insufficient for staying below these limits. Canada’s per person greenhouse gas emissions are one of the world’s highest. We have not been doing our fair share of reducing emissions and have also weakened our previous commitments.

For the first time, the IPCC has estimated a “carbon budget,” telling us how much carbon dioxide we can further emit into the atmosphere and still have a greater chance of staying below the 2 degree limit. They estimate that collective emissions worldwide cannot exceed one trillion tons of carbon dioxide.

The world currently emits around 38 billion tons per year. In its World

Energy Outlook 2014, the International Energy Agency projects that the entire budget of one trillion tons will be used up by 2040. They conclude that “the 2°C objective requires urgent action to steer the energy system on to a safer path.”

Many scientists and countries on the frontlines of climate change do not consider 2 degrees to be a safe path and are calling for lower limits. This would require an even smaller carbon budget.

Who is most vulnerable?

The least developed countries, as well as small island and low-lying coastal countries—about 83 nations altogether—are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts such as droughts, floods, sea level rise, and extreme weather. They are calling for global warming to be kept below 1.5°C and for more immediate actions to reduce global emissions of greenhouse gases. These countries include

Malawi, Guyana, the Dominican Republic, Bahamas, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and other countries where Scarboro missionaries serve or have served.

This call to stay below 1.5°C was echoed by nine Catholic bishops in a statement issued in Lima at the time of the United Nations Climate Change Conference this past December. These bishops follow an option for the poor, working closely with and wanting to protect vulnerable communities. They also call for “new models of development and lifestyles that are both climate compatible and bring people out of poverty,” which means putting “an end to the fossil fuel era, phasing out fossil fuel emissions and phasing in 100 percent renewables with sustainable energy access for all.”

Fossil fuels (coal, oil, and gas) are the basis of many benefits found in industrialized society—warm homes, easy transportation, jobs that help take care of families, and many products we

use daily. However, our use of fossil fuels has gone beyond sustainable levels due to consumerism, waste, and an economy that values profits and growth over the common good. Scientists are starting to call our time period the Age of the Anthropocene because of the decisive impact humans are having on the planet through climate change, ocean acidification, and ecosystem destruction.

We need a collective change of heart. As Christians, we already know what lies at the heart of our faith—to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbour as ourselves (*Mark 12:30-31*). God loves all of creation and called it “very good” (*Genesis 1:31*). God always calls us to conversion, to grow in love. This love moves us away from harming and towards protecting God’s good creation, of which we are an interdependent part.

Living within planetary limits

Learning to live within planetary limits and moving away from our dependency on fossil fuels are vital. The IPCC estimates that the world’s fossil fuel reserves currently still underground contain potential carbon dioxide emissions that are four to seven times greater than the carbon budget limit for staying below 2 degrees. Despite this, governments continue to subsidize fossil fuels, which encourages more production and use of them at a time when we need to use less. People of faith have joined with others in continuing calls to end these subsidies.

It is generally accepted that paying for disposal of our solid garbage encourages us to throw out less. In the same way, placing a fee on the invisible

Resources for protecting creation

Global Catholic Climate Movement: www.catholicclimatemovement.global

Building a strong Catholic voice on climate change—Catholic teachings and Gospel-centred awareness-raising inside the Church and advocacy for a strong international climate agreement. Current initiative is *Lent Fast for Climate Justice*. All Catholics are invited to join this new movement.

Catholic Climate Covenant: www.catholicclimatecovenant.org

Helping Catholics to address climate change and care for creation. Catholic teachings, news, resources. Supported by the US Catholic bishops.

KAIROS: www.kairoscanada.org/sustainability/climate-justice

Ecumenical resources on climate justice.

Greening Sacred Spaces: www.greeningsacredspaces.net

Assisting faith communities in making their places of worship more environmentally sustainable and educating about ecological concerns.

Green Church Program: www.greenchurch.ca

Helping Christian communities with environmental awareness and practices, including resources for greening religious buildings and liturgical resources.

carbon waste from fossil fuels would encourage us to dump less of it into the Earth’s atmosphere. British Columbia implemented a carbon tax in 2008 with a tax credit for people on low incomes to help offset its impact. Since that time, while the rest of Canada’s fossil fuel use per person has risen more than 3 percent, BC’s has declined by 16 percent.

There are other hopeful trends. Clean energy investment and jobs have been growing swiftly in Canada. Blue Green Canada, an alliance of labour and environmental groups, estimates that investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency and public transportation would create 6 to 8 times more jobs than an equal investment in fossil fuels. Solar power has become more affordable as prices have dropped significantly. SolarShare, a not-for-profit that quickly became Canada’s leading renewable energy co-operative, is expanding community-based solar electricity generation in Ontario.

An increasing sign of hope are the people around the world who are learning about climate change and realizing that most fossil fuels have to stay in the ground if we hope to limit the planet’s warming. The moral and financial implications have led to a growing international fossil fuel divestment movement that began in 2012 and includes educational and religious

institutions, local governments, foundations, and other organizations. Many are seeking to re-invest funds in more sustainable alternatives. Others, like members of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility in the United States, have intensified their efforts as vocal shareholders in fossil fuel companies, hoping to influence policies.

Greening Sacred Spaces assists faith communities in making their places of worship more environmentally sustainable and educating about ecological concerns. In March 2014 their Annual Forum focused on fossil fuel investments and climate change, and explored different responses including divestment, ethical investment options, and re-investment in renewable energy. Resources and support on these topics are currently being provided for faith communities by a new Canadian interfaith divestment network called Fossil Free Faith.

With a long history of serving the poor in mission, Scarboro missionaries also engaged in discussion and reflection on fossil fuel investments, carbon budgets, climate change, and the ongoing impact of climate change on the world’s poorest peoples. Last October Scarboro Missions decided to divest over a period of about five years from stocks and bonds in fossil fuels and related infrastructure. It is one way of living out Scarboro’s ecological mis-



Credit: Monica Lambton

sion statement. Steps have also been taken to reduce Scarboro Missions’ fossil fuel use, such as an energy audit and various building retrofits including insulation, windows, boilers, and a solar assisted water heater.

People of hope and love

As Christians, our hope rests in God, the source of love and life. However, this does not lead to passive waiting but an active living of that hope and love. People are finding many ways, often joining together, to take up this vocation as protector and living hope in this age of climate change.

Living this vocation involves bringing together three responses found in the Christian tradition—the contemplative, the ascetic and the prophetic—as outlined by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in their 2003 Pastoral Letter on the Christian Ecological Imperative: *You love all that exists... all things are Yours, God, lover of life*. The contemplative response leads us to deepen our appreciation of the wonders of nature and our relationship with the Creator of life. The ascetic response involves an ongoing process of life-

style changes so we decrease our use of fossil fuels and restrain from excess consumerism in order to “respect ecological limits, attune us to solidarity with vulnerable peoples, as well as encourage the movement of grace in our lives.”

The prophetic response, such as raising concerns with political representatives and working for broader economic and social justice, is essential to effectively limit climate change. We, as Canadians in an election year, have an opportunity for a prophetic response. Now is a good time to ask one’s MP about election platforms being developed. Nearer the election, we can ask questions of party candidates. Questions could include: What does your party propose to effectively deal with climate change, including Canada’s contribution to the global effort? How will your party support a transition to sustainable energy? How will your party protect poor communities around the world and help meet their needs for sustainable energy?

This year, Pope Francis is expected to release the first ever encyclical on ecology. In a speech to the popular

“To change everything, it takes everyone” was one of the themes at the People’s Climate March in New York City, September 21, 2014. An estimated 400,000 people of all ages, faiths, and cultures took part in the biggest climate march in history.

movements of the poor and marginalized from around the world meeting at the Vatican last October, the Pope praised their struggles against injustice and assured he will include their concerns in the encyclical. He also said, “All peoples of the Earth, all men and women of good will—all of us must raise our voices in defence of these two precious gifts: peace and nature.”

Some 400,000 people of all ages, faiths, and cultures did just that at the Climate March preceding the United Nations Climate Summit last September in New York City. Leading the march were members of communities and Indigenous Peoples from around the world who are at the forefront of impacts and resistance associated with climate change and fossil fuel extraction. Indigenous Peoples in particular have been leaders in protecting the land and sharing their wisdom on living in harmony with Mother Earth. Climate marches and solidarity events were also held in more than 160 other countries.

In *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis offers a faith perspective on the ultimate basis of our hope: “The kingdom is here, it returns, it struggles to flourish anew. Christ’s resurrection everywhere calls forth seeds of that new world; even if they are cut back, they grow again, for the resurrection is already secretly woven into the fabric of this history, for Jesus did not rise in vain. May we never remain on the sidelines of this march of living hope!”[∞]

Karen Van Loon is the coordinator of Scarboro’s Office of Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation.

Catholic bishops' statement

On the second day of negotiations at the UN climate talks (the 20th Conference of the Parties or COP20) in Lima in December 2014, an international coalition of bishops issued a statement calling for an end to fossil fuel use and for increased efforts to secure a global climate agreement at the COP21 in Paris in 2015.

We Catholic Bishops from all continents have come together in Lima on the occasion of COP20 to join the efforts of world leaders as they work towards signing a just and legally binding climate agreement in Paris in 2015.

Following the evangelical option for the poor, we work closely with the most vulnerable communities and the excluded and as such are closely attuned to how the problem of climate change is affecting them. Our message to political leaders and all people of good will is rooted in the experience and suffering of these poor communities.

Humankind on the Planet Earth is ordained to live in equity, justice and dignity, peace and harmony in the midst of the order of Creation. Humankind is ordered to treat respectfully Creation, which has a value in itself. We Catholic Bishops recognize the atmosphere, rainforests, oceans, and agricultural land as common good that require our care.

Climate change and climate justice today

We recognize that much good has happened on Earth through the rightful and responsible intelligence, technology, and industry of humankind under God's loving care. And yet in recent decades many grave adversities such as climate change, with its devastating impact on Nature itself, on food security, health and migration, led to a great number of suffering people worldwide.

We express an answer to what is considered God's appeal to take action on the urgent and damaging situation of global climate warming. The main responsibility for this situation lies with the dominant global economic system, which is a human creation. In viewing objectively the destructive effects of a financial and economic order based on the primacy of the market and profit, which has failed to put the human being and the common good at the heart of the economy, one must recognize the systemic failures of this order and the need for a new financial and economic order.

We note with appreciation that in our times, States, Religions, and Groups of Civil Society and individuals at all levels are recognizing more and more the natural as well as the ethical concerns of this matter. We wish to see therefore a deepening of the discourse at the COP20 in Lima, to ensure

concrete decisions are taken at COP21 to overcome the climate challenge and to set us on new sustainable pathways.

We recognize that in line with truly democratic principles the poor and the poorer nations, who are many and are more affected by climate change impacts, are also agents in the development of nations and human life on earth. They also give us a voice and a sense of hope in our times as we face crises such as climate change. We hope their gentle, meaningful and active participation will encourage decision makers to develop more mixed systems instead of "one size fits all" modern technological-industrial approaches.

We as Bishops call on all parties

1. to keep in mind not only the technical but particularly the ethical and moral dimensions of climate change as indicated in Article 3 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

2. to adopt a fair and legally binding global agreement, based on the universal human rights applicable to all, in Paris in 2015.

3. to keep the global temperature increase below 1.5 degree Celsius, relative to pre-industrial levels, in order to protect frontline communities suffering from the impacts of climate change such as those in the Pacific Islands and in the coastal regions.

4. to build new models of development and lifestyles that are both climate compatible and bring people out of poverty. Central to this is to put an end to the fossil fuel era, phasing out fossil fuel emissions and phasing in 100 percent renewables with sustainable energy access for all.

5. to ensure that the 2015 agreement delivers an adaptation approach that adequately responds to the immediate needs of the most vulnerable communities and builds on local alternatives. They should ensure that 50 percent of public funds go to meeting their adaptation needs.

6. to recognize that adaptation needs are contingent on the success of mitigation measures taken. Those responsible for climate change have responsibilities to assist the most vulnerable in adapting and managing loss and damage and to share the necessary technology and knowhow.

7. to adopt clear roadmaps on how countries will meet predictable and additional finance commitments and establish robust and transparent accounting methodologies.



Credit: Jim McIntyre, Citizens for Public Justice

On December 7, 2014, Ottawa faith communities joined an international candlelight and solar-lit vigil as part of the Light for Lima campaign to pray for action on the part of world leaders meeting at the UN climate negotiations in Lima at that time. The Ottawa group began with an interfaith prayer vigil at St. Peter's Lutheran Church followed by a march to Parliament Hill.

Our commitment

We Catholic Bishops believe that Creation is life offered, is a gift for one another and that all will have the needed "daily bread," providing sustainable food security and nutrition.

We Catholic Bishops commit ourselves to developing the sense of gratuitousness to contribute to a lifestyle which frees us from a desire of appropriation and enables us to be respectful of the dignity of the person and the harmony of creation.

We Bishops want to accompany the political process and seek dialogue to bring the voices of the poor to the table of decision-makers; we are convinced that everyone has a capacity to contribute to overcome climate change and to choose sustainable lifestyles.

We Bishops call on all Catholics and people of good will to engage on the road to Paris as a starting point for a new life in harmony with Creation respecting planetary boundaries.[∞]

Bishop signatories:

Monsignor Salvador Piñeiro García-Calderón, Archbishop of Ayacucho, Peru; President of the Bishops' Conference of Peru
Monsignor Pedro Barreto Jimeno, Archbishop of Huancayo, Peru; President of the Justice and Solidarity Department of the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM)
Monsignor Sithembele Antón Sipuka, Bishop of Umtata, South Africa; Representative of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM)
Monsignor Theotonius Gomes, Auxiliary Bishop of Dhaka (Emeritus), Bangladesh; Representative of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC)
Monsignor Marc Stenger, Bishop of Troyes; Representative of the Episcopal Conference of France
Monsignor Zanon Demettino Castro, Archbishop of Feira de Santana, Brazil; Representative of the Bishops' Conference of Brazil
Monsignor Richard Alarcón Urrutia, Bishop of Tarma; President of Caritas Peru
Monsignor Jaime Rodríguez, Bishop of Huánuco, Perú
Monsignor Alfredo Vizcarra, Bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of San Francisco Javier de Jaén, Peru

Written in collaboration with our Catholic agencies CEAS (Peru), CIDSE, Caritas Internationalis, CAFOD (UK), CCFD-Terre Solidaire (France), Cordaid (The Netherlands), Development and Peace (Canada), MISEREOR (Germany), Secours Catholique (France) and Trócaire (Ireland).



By Joe Gunn

We'll always have Paris

2015 and climate politics

“We'll always have Paris,” Humphrey Bogart growled to the dazzling Ingrid Bergman in that most famous line from the 1942 hit movie, *Casablanca*. In 2015, a meeting on climate change will be held in the French capital and help determine if indeed we'll *always* have Paris.

The United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP21) will take place in December 2015. The objective of the Paris conference is to achieve, for the first time in more than 20 years of UN negotiations, a binding and universal agreement on climate that includes all 196 signatory nations. The overarching imperative is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions such that the global temperature increase remains under 2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels.

The challenge for Canadian people of faith in 2015 will be to ensure that our country plays its rightful role in the lead-up to the Paris meeting, in the negotiations there, and in reducing our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions immediately as well as in the commitment period beginning in 2020.

Climate change is already resulting in serious consequences, including sea level rises, heat waves, loss of snow and ice cover, disruptions to agriculture and food production, and greater extremes of drought and rainfall. Canada's own National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy has estimated that climate change will cost our economy \$5 billion annually by 2020. Already in 2010, the cost of damage associated with global climate change reached \$591 billion.

Play it again, Sam...

Back In the movie *Casablanca*, Bergman's Ilsa implores the house pianist to play “As Time Goes By” one more time. Today, in the lead-up to Paris, we do not have the luxury of playing the same tune yet again. Canada's Commissioner for the Environment and Sustainable Development, Julie Gelfand, reported in October that “Environment Canada lacks...an effective planning process for how the federal government will contribute to achieving [our climate] targets.” Most of the progress in reducing emissions has come as a result of provincial initiatives (like Ontario's decision to end electricity generation from coal), she said. “Current federal measures will have little effect on emissions by 2020.”

The challenge for Canadian people of faith in 2015 will be to ensure that our country plays its rightful role in the lead-up to the Paris meeting.

Canada is the only signatory country to withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol (in 2011) and is constantly criticized for blocking progress at international negotiations. As well, our GHG emissions are increasing, rather than falling. While the federal government had for years promised to release regulations on emissions in the oil and gas sector, in December the Prime Minister decided to break this commitment, now calling the idea “crazy economic policy.” Policies of the same old, same old will not meet our current commitments, much less measure up to the greater ambition of cutting emissions that is needed at the Paris COP.

As Time Goes By...

Again in *Casablanca*, Rick asks Sam to stop playing “As Time Goes By”, a song that brings back painful memories of Ilsa. In Canada, too much time has passed by without us playing our rightful role to reach emissions reductions and a global agreement. Climate responses are cumulative—if less is done now, more will be required in future. Acting immediately can lower costs and damages. It is only a false economy that argues for business as usual in a scenario that threatens future generations and all creation on Earth.

There are points of hope to encourage concerned citizens, however. The November 2014 announcement of an agreement among the world's largest economies and highest GHG emitters (China and the USA) created new momentum for change. The US target is particularly ambi-

tious: a reduction in GHG emissions of 26-28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025. Since the Canadian government's climate policies have imitated those of Washington, Canadians could now pressure their government for a response of a similar magnitude.

In late November, Canada pledged \$300 million to the Green Climate Fund. Although OXFAM has calculated Canada's rightful contribution to this global fund for developing countries at \$419 million, it is notable that this announcement was Canada's only commitment since 2012. Also, provincial governments, working with some US jurisdictions like California, announced their intention to move forward with carbon reduction strategies, despite Ottawa's intransigence. And mirrored in the success of the huge Climate March in New York in September, in which many Canadians participated, an Environics poll has suggested that more than half of Canadians are now in favour of a tax on carbon emissions.

In the lead-up to Paris, there is much we can do:

1. In your parish, share the Canadian Interfaith Call for Leadership and Action on Climate Change. Use the statement of nine Catholic bishops from around the world, released at the COP20 meeting in Lima, in which they demand that a just and legally binding climate agreement be signed at the COP21 in Paris. They also call for a new standard: keeping the global temperature increase to below 1.5°C, and “phasing in 100 percent renewables

Supporters and fasters at ClimateFast on October 1, 2014, day 11 of their 12-day fast on Parliament Hill. Fasters demonstrated their commitment to action on climate change and challenged the government's political will. A growing movement worldwide to fast for the climate began in November 2013 in solidarity with Philippine climate commissioner “Yeb” Saño. Mr. Saño was at the UN climate conference in Warsaw while his family was being impacted by Typhoon Haiyan. He gave a moving speech calling for urgent action on climate change and saying he would not eat until a meaningful outcome was in sight at the conference.



Credit: Brad Wassink, Citizens for Public Justice

with sustainable energy access for all.”

2. Watch for the first-ever encyclical on the environment to be released by Pope Francis in 2015. Organize a study and action session using its contents.

3. Countries are supposed to announce their GHG emission reduction targets, or “nationally-determined contributions,” by March. Canada has not yet committed to do so. Demand that Canada's commitment be released in March, at an ambitious level.

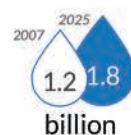
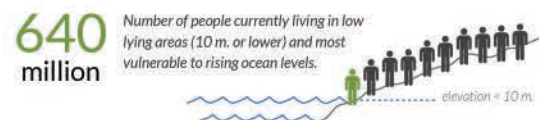
4. Invite members of your parish to Lenten study sessions on ecological justice using the prayers, reflections, and action suggestions in the booklet, “Living Ecological Justice: A Biblical Response to the Environmental Crisis” published by Citizens for Public Justice: www.cpj.ca/lej

5. Consider organizing a climate vigil, Prayers for Paris, or similar educational event in your faith community, using the prayer, worship, and action suggestions available at www.cpj.ca/climate.

Casablanca was nominated for eight Academy Awards and won three. If faith communities work to care for creation, we might also win some victories for all God's creation in 2015.∞

Joe Gunn grew up in Scarborough, Ontario, and serves as executive director of Citizens for Public Justice [www.cpj.ca], a member-driven, faith-based public policy organization in Ottawa.

Climate change will have significant, worldwide effects in coming decades.

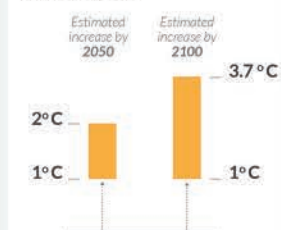


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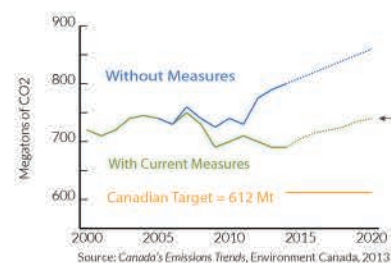
Of all animal species at risk of extinction by 2050. Experts anticipate that within the next 100 years there will be no polar bears in the wild.

The average global temperature is predicted to rise sharply over the next century.

Estimated range of increase in global mean surface temperature, from 1990 levels



Canada has not done enough to meet its own climate change obligations.



Canada's greenhouse gas emissions **continue to rise**. Current measures are inadequate, meaning **Canada will fall far short** of its target.

The faith community has shown some leadership, but must do more.

Many of the national churches have engaged political leaders, advocating for far-reaching action to address climate change.



"Creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God."
Romans 8: 19

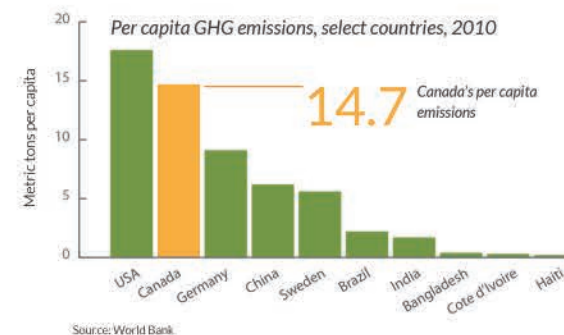
Together, faith communities have called for leadership to "...put the long-term interest of humanity and the planet ahead of short-term economic and national concerns."

Canadian Interfaith Call for Leadership and Action on Climate Change, 2011

Climate change infographic

Climate change is a critical issue and has implications for Canadians and people around the world. With the support of the Canadian Council of Churches, Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) has developed this infographic on the global climate change crisis and the need for action. CPJ is a national organization of members inspired by faith to act for justice in Canadian public policy.

Canadians must take action to tackle climate change.



Per capita, Canada is one of the **world's most egregious** emitters of greenhouse gases.

While it's important for people to make positive change at the individual level, the reality is that "personal greening" will not be enough to address climate change.

What's needed is systemic change at the federal – and international – policy level.

This is what we need.



1. A Binding International Agreement to Reduce Carbon Emissions

Sign and implement an agreement that commits nations to reduce emissions and set targets to ensure that global average temperatures stay (at least) below a 2° C increase from pre-industrial levels.



2. Canadian Carbon Emissions Targets & Renewable Energy Policy

Commit to national carbon emission targets and a national renewable energy policy designed to achieve sustainability.



3. Support the International Green Climate Fund

Contribute public funds to the Green Climate Fund (under UN governance) to assist the poorest and most affected countries to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

This agreement should be reached no later than December 2015 at the 21st meeting of UN Conference of Parties (COP21) in Paris.

Source: Canadian Interfaith Call for Leadership and Action on Climate Change, www.cpj.ca/canadian-interfaith-call-leadership-and-action-climate-change

I almost didn't write this poem

Scrabbling as I was for a piece of paper
or any scrap to write on before the name slipped
into folds of brain,
like a sliver of soap in the bath.

I almost didn't write this poem, but a yellow corner
of parking ticket was enough to jot the name:
Maldives (the tiny islands off India
that are shrinking as the oceans slowly rise.)

A sari'd woman said they will hold a Scuba Summit there—
men and women in wet suits under water
so members would know the feel
of silently submerging,
groping for breath,
vanishing.

(I get the bends just thinking about it.)

Watermarks on a map
erasing the name of a country.

I almost didn't write this poem
because the ticket was too small
for all the penciled words
that spiraled into the margins.
I wrote smaller and smaller
'til I almost gave up.

I printed my name and address on the petition
wondering what words can do
to save the lowest land mass on Earth.

But then a thought bubbled up:
I almost didn't write this poem,
whose last word is

Maldives.



By Kate Marshall-Flaherty

Guyana

Scarboro missionaries have been present in Guyana since 1953. Close to 80 percent of Guyana's population lives in the low lying coastal region. At the highest tide levels, large waves can breach the seawalls that protect the more populated areas. With parts of the country already below sea level, further sea level rise would cause even more flooding. About 75 percent of Guyana is forested. While tropical forests occupy only seven percent of the Earth's surface, they capture and store an estimated 1.3 billion tonnes of carbon per year. Deforestation destroys the planet's natural air conditioning provided by forests. Photos by Scarboro Missions.



Kan'ditheemu, Maldives

Young people illustrate the survival threat faced by their Maldivian community, country, and culture.

Credit: Mohamed Fahumee, 350.org

The Maldives, an archipelago of more than 1,000 islands and 350,000 people, is located in the Indian Ocean off southern India. It is the lowest lying nation on Earth.



By Monica Lambton

People's Climate March

An experience of hope and solidarity

Last September, on my husband's birthday, I headed to New York City to join the People's Climate March. September is a busy time at our house with two teenagers starting a new school year, and I would miss meet the teacher night. But something had shifted in me. I felt that being in New York was a priority among priorities, one that would help build a solid foundation for a future filled with more birthdays, school years, and other landmark events.

I arrived to find the city teeming with climate activists from around the world. At the workshops on Saturday, hopes were expressed as to the numbers who might come to the march. Our deepest wishes were answered on Sunday when about 400,000 marchers mobilized on the streets of New York. Simultaneously, more than 2,000 rallies took place in 162 countries, including marches in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Halifax, and elsewhere in Canada. Worldwide, almost a million people marched that day, united for action on climate change.

Indigenous Peoples, Pacific Islanders, those living in poverty, and others on the frontlines of climate change led the marchers in New York. People of all ages, faiths, and backgrounds followed. These included families, students, scientists, labour groups, community groups, as well as political and interfaith leaders, all sporting an array of colourful banners, posters, and t-shirts. A feeling of hope and joy permeated the event.

It wasn't long before we saw our efforts bring action. The following

day, the Rockefeller Fund announced its decision to divest from fossil fuels on the giant screens in Times Square where the marchers had passed less than 24 hours before.

We need to work for much more. At pre-march events Bill McKibben, co-founder of 350.org, an international climate campaign and the organizing body of the march, emphasized the urgency. He said, "If we don't get it right quickly, then we don't get it right." Both he and author Naomi Klein, a board member of 350.org, talked about how we would measure the success of the march. They said that it's not only about the quantity, it's about the quality. One of the themes of the march was, "To change everything, it's going to take everyone."

Where do we fit in?

Since that weekend, doors have opened and opportunities have appeared that were not there before. When world leaders gathered at the UN Climate Summit in New York two days later, President Obama said, "Our people are marching in the street; we can no longer pretend we can't hear them." Many of us have felt discouraged and defeated when it comes to climate change. We know it is happening, but apart from some personal lifestyle changes, it hasn't been clear what we can do. Things are different today. We are at a particular moment and as people of faith it is time to act.

It is no longer about the science. Climate change is a moral, ethical, and spiritual issue. There is a feeling that the scientists have done their part—the

facts are clear and the solutions have been uncovered. Now, in order for us to act we need hope and a path to transformation. Faith communities have something valuable to contribute to the climate movement. We hear God calling us to repentance and conversion, calling us to be Easter people, filled with hope and love for all creation.

On the evening of the march, I attended an interfaith service at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. The speaker list included former US Vice-President Al Gore, Indian scientist and environmental activist Dr. Vandana Shiva, Sojourners founder Reverend Jim Wallis, and Indigenous and faith leaders from around the world. This was an intense, cathartic, and joyous celebration at the end of an emotionally charged day.

The Indigenous reality

After experiencing the hope-filled Indigenous presence at the march and the interfaith service I made my way the next day to the UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and encountered the other side of global Indigenous reality. One of the presenters, a young woman from Beaver Lake Cree Nation (Treaty 6) located about 100 kilometres northeast of Edmonton, was sharing the experiences of her community as they struggle with the ecological consequences of the Tar Sands. She had seven minutes to speak, and upon hearing her two minute warning, she froze. With emotion in her voice she said, "I cannot summarize my people's suffering in two minutes." Despite this, she bravely continued



Staff and Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame from Canada and the United States take part in the People's Climate March. September 19, 2014, New York City. Photo credit: CND Sisters

with her presentation.

In the two days that followed, I heard speaker after speaker with a similar message: land was being taken or corrupted, people were falling sick, dying, or leaving their communities. There was little hope for a future. A common theme was the importance of establishing "free, prior, and informed consent" and how this principle was so often violated by extractive industries on Indigenous land.

"We did not consent," said another Canadian First Nations presenter who explained that 80 percent of her community's lands had been leased for oil extraction. I once heard Sylvia McAdam, a lawyer and one of the founders of the Idle No More movement, say that she was motivated to do something because of the idea that in law silence can mean consent. She did not want her silence to be misinterpreted as consent for what she saw happening on her land, so she began to use her voice. We must follow suit. We can leave our consenting silence behind and seek out opportunities to build a future based on ecological, economic, and social justice.

At the interfaith service Jim Wallis said, "I have to work on climate because everything on my list is being disrupted by climate change." What's

on his list? *Feeding the hungry...* as climate change is disrupting food security; *clothing the naked...* as people are being stripped of everything in devastating and deadly storms; *welcoming the stranger...* as more and more people are becoming climate refugees; *being a peacemaker...* as conflicts over resources increase.

While we search for a way forward, we realize that we don't have much time. We are keenly aware that we have missed many opportunities. Midway through the interfaith service, an Indigenous Elder from Greenland shared that in 1978 a member of his community spoke to the UN to warn about the shrinking ice in his country. Despite receiving a standing ovation for his presentation, no action was taken by the countries of the world. Telling the story several decades later, the Elder said he has again been sent to address the UN, this time to say that

the ice has shrunk from five kilometres to just two kilometres thick in his lifetime.

At the UN Climate Summit there was another Indigenous voice, Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, a woman

from the Marshall Islands. She too received a standing ovation for her presentation, which included a poem to her daughter in which she promises that "we will not let you down." This time we must follow this standing ovation with meaningful change and consider seriously what happens next. It is imperative that we act today so as to build the foundations for a more secure and peaceful world.∞

Monica Lambton lives in Montreal and is the Coordinator of the Office of Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation for the English-speaking Canadian Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame. She went to New York with a contingent of CND staff and Sisters from Canada and the United States.

Articles and videos to experience the march and to reflect on what next:

www.peoplesclimate.org/wrap-up/

"Why you should be hopeful about the climate movement" by Todd Gitlin on *Grist*

"The Wisdom of the Crowd", by Hendrik Hertzberg in *The New Yorker*

"Into the Streets", a nine-minute video about the march from Meerkat Media

Idle No More at the People's Climate March: www.youtube.com/watch?v=qs585zaaMbM

Speech by Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner: www.upworthy.com/watch-this-non-celebrity-bring-a-room-full-of-world-leaders-to-a-standing-ovation



By Dr. Randolph Haluza-DeLay

Interfaith Summit on Climate Change

Religious leaders from around the world commit to the task of addressing “the greatest moral issue of our time”

Announcements about Pope Francis’ upcoming encyclical on ecology in which he will address the issue of climate change have created some buzz, even among academic climate change researchers. The hope is that maybe he can do what all the politicians haven’t been able to do—motivate an agreement for international action on climate change. That same hope led hundreds of faith leaders from around the world to gather in New York City last September, immediately before the summit of world political leaders called by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon.

At the centre of their gathering was the Interfaith Summit on Climate Change organized by Religions for Peace and the World Council of Churches. Thirty high-level religious leaders attended from six continents and every major faith tradition. They signed a statement that began, “we stand together to express deep concern for the consequences of climate change on the earth and its people.”

Cardinals from the Vatican and imams from North Africa rubbed shoulders with an Indigenous women’s leader from Argentina, an Inuit elder from Greenland, several Hindu, Sikh, and Jewish leaders, and Christians from every continent. The UN’s climate head, Christina Figueres of Costa Rica, urged these religious luminaries to “find their voice on climate change” and to mobilize their faithful.

At the same time, 200 others participated in a conference at Union Theological Seminary on Religions for the Earth. Participants discussed and planned for ways to mobilize the two-thirds of the world for whom religion is directly important in their personal lives. Most also joined the estimated 400,000 who walked in the People’s Climate March through the streets of New York.

The weekend ended with a multi-faith worship service at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. Music, sacred dance, speakers, Inuit drumming and prayer combined in the two-hour spectacle that highlighted the special contributions of each religion to the task of addressing what leaders increasingly have called “the greatest moral issue of our time.”

“The twin sides of my faith... doing

and worshipping,” said a Christian leader from the Pacific Islands, which are experiencing climate change impacts such as saline encroachment on fresh water and storm surges from sea level rise.

Religious attention to climate change is not new, but there seems to be a renewed sense that political negotiations are not enough. The growing attention by religions energized participants. Most talked about the importance of hope. “I waver between the rising balloons of optimism and the brick bats of cynicism,” said someone in a question period. Others pointed out that religions consistently talk about restraint, opposition to greed and material accumulation, joy in simplicity, compromise, cooperation, and these are spiritual aspects of climate change that must be part of any



WCC/Melissa Engle Hess

At the Interfaith Summit on Climate Change, leaders from around the globe, representing nine faith traditions, sign a statement calling for concrete actions to curb carbon emissions. New York City, September 21, 2014. Signatories and text for “Climate, Faith and Hope: Faith traditions together for a common future” can be found at interfaithclimate.org



Two phoenix sculptures hang from the ceiling, above the heads of the faith leaders and those gathered in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine for an interfaith service invoking prayers and actions on climate change. September 21, 2014, New York. Photo above and on facing page: WCC/Melissa Engle Hess

solutions. It was no coincidence that the climate march and signing of the Interfaith Statement fell on the UN’s World Day of Peace.

Climate change is becoming a humanitarian issue with effects like flooding, storms, and drought increasing. “We cannot call these ‘natural’ disasters anymore,” said an African Indigenous spiritual guide as a reason her organization sent her to sign the statement. Since religious organizations doing international relief and development are often at the forefront of responding to disasters, a changing climate will add more pressure to these organizations and their supporters.

Climate justice

Perhaps more importantly, the religions bring a moral voice about “climate justice.” While the consequences of climate change affect all people, they especially affect the poor of the world because of geographic location and lack of resources to deal with the

effects. Mobilizing the faithful means encouraging all to “join the climate justice movement,” said Guillermo Kerber who coordinates the work on Care for Creation and Climate Justice at the World Council of Churches.

Religions for the Earth ended with a web-based campaign to encourage the world’s religious citizens to speak up by going to www.ourvoices.net. Others have been taking part in a Climate Fast the first day of each month. The most far-reaching proposals include efforts to divest from fossil fuels. Several charitable foundations, led by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, announced at the event that they were divesting from fossil fuels. Personal lifestyle changes are needed, particularly from those in countries that have contributed most to climate change. A statement read from the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of the Orthodox Churches insisted that each believer has a responsibility to act and that faithful discipleship also

includes “prevailing upon governments and leaders” for effective policy and accountable action. The Catholic Climate Covenant is a good source of information and practical steps for individuals and organizations.

The years have seen numerous statements on climate change and innumerable gatherings of the concerned. Our duty to God means caring for creation, and human society is not doing well at the task. The challenge is for religious organizations—leadership and faithful in the pews—to seriously consider what this duty requires.∞

Randolph Haluza-DeLay, PhD, is a sociologist at The King’s University in Edmonton, Alberta. His most recent research includes the co-edited book, How the World’s Religions are Responding to Climate Change. Email: randy.haluza-delay@kingsu.ca

Earth, water, air, fire

*Celebrating God's presence through the elements...
A contemplative response to creation*

By Kathy Murtha

**“The beauty and grandeur of nature
touches each one of us.**

**From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form,
nature is a constant source of wonder and awe.
It is also a continuing revelation of the divine.”**

*Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
Pastoral Letter on the Christian Ecological Imperative*

We came into existence when our transcendent God reached into the Earth and molded the soil to shape our being. Then, in a loving, intimate gesture, God breathed His Sacred Breath into our nostrils stirring us to life. Immersion into the waters of life marks our entrance into the Christian community. Bread and wine, the fruits of the Earth laid out on the Eucharistic table, nourish us on the journey. We are inspired and enlivened by the Spirit envisioned as wind and fire.

Earth, water, air, and fire... These elements are integrally woven into our Christian faith, teachings, and traditions, revealing to us the nature of God. Saint Columba, a sixth century Irish abbot and missionary, describes God as “the Lord of the Elements.” In Celtic spirituality there is a strong, joyous affirmation of creation as the first great sacrament—the unity that binds together Heaven and Earth. Perhaps the most powerful expression of this creation-affirming, non-dualistic

worldview can be found in the words of Saint Patrick's Breastplate:

*“I arise today
Through the strength of heaven,
Light of the sun,
Radiance of the moon,
Splendour of fire,
Speed of lightning,
Swiftness of the wind,
Depth of the sea,
Stability of the earth,
Firmness of the rock.*

This view stands in stark contrast to that of Greek philosopher Aristotle whose vision ultimately came to shape our Western consciousness. According to Aristotle, Heaven and Earth are two worlds separate and apart; the heavenly world represents the spiritual and the perfect, while the earthly realm embodies the material and the imperfect. Tragically, our hearts are often torn between fully living and loving in our earthly home, and setting our sights and hopes in another more spiritual world. There has been a per-

sistent and disempowering tendency to perceive the Christian religion as an escape strategy to safely launch us out of our present home into another more heavenly world somewhere else. This has contributed to our losing a sense of creation as a revelation of God.

The Celtic approach faithfully harkens back to an earlier Christian teaching that there are two Sacred Books of Revelation; one is the Sacred Scriptures and the other is creation. When asked what he would do if he could no longer read the Holy Scriptures, third century Egyptian Desert Father Saint Anthony immediately replied, “My book, Sir Philosopher, is the nature of created things and it is always on hand when I wish to read it.”

In the same spirit Thomas Merton, a more recent monastic hermit, insisted: “How necessary it is for monks to work in the fields, in the rain, in the sun, in the mud, in the clay, in the wind: these are our spiritual directors and our novice-masters. They form our contemplation. They instill us with virtue. They make us stable as the land we live in.”

Connecting and praying with the elements is an ancient Christian practice that leads us back to Jesus whose feet were firmly planted on the Earth. We find Jesus at the sea shore, in fields and on mountain tops, by gardens and wells. He used earthly images such as seeds, water, fruit, and fire to describe God's nature and dream. By reclaiming this tradition we are addressing Teilhard de Chardin's fear that “unless, it [Christianity] receives a new blood transfusion from matter, Christian spirituality may well lose its vigour and



Kate Marshall Flaherty (left) and Kathy Murtha, facilitators of the retreat, “Celebrating God's presence through images of air, earth, water, and fire.”

become lost in the clouds.”

The elements are concrete and vivid sources of revelation of the Sacred and provide us with a way to begin to express and experience the transcendent. Saint Hildegard of Bingen who saw God in all things writes:

*“I am the fiery life of divine essence.
I gleam in the water. I burn in the sun,
moon, and stars. With every breeze,
I awaken everything to life. I am the
breeze that nurtures all things green.
I encourage blossoms to flourish with
ripening fruits. I am the rain coming
from the dew that causes the grasses
to laugh with joy.”*

We use the language of the elements to describe the Trinity: God, whose breath sustains us; Jesus as Light and Living Water; and Spirit as Fire and Wind. Without integrating the Christian message and vision with the elements, Christianity would lose much of its power as a sacred path to God.

The language of the elements can be a universal sacred language that overcomes differences and boundaries to offer us a precious means to enter into communion with others while remaining faithful to our own religious trad-

ition. In our search for bridges of peace and understanding among the world's religions and even those outside of religious traditions, the elements are an ideal source for meaningful dialogue and unity. As we begin to fully realize that the elements are not just outside of ourselves but intimately flow through us, we find ourselves being called home—to our global family, to our Mother Earth, and to our place in the web of life. Sadly, we have been gone for a long time.

A contemplative response

In their remarkable *Pastoral Letter on the Christian Ecological Imperative*, the Canadian Catholic bishops urge us first and foremost to develop a contemplative stance towards nature. Our bishops together now with Pope Francis invite us to stand in awe before the beauty of all creation. The contemplative approach, the bishops assert, will encourage and sustain us in our efforts to walk gently on this Earth and be more consciously life-enhancing beings. By transforming our hearts and, as Mahatma Gandhi said, “becoming the change we want to see in the world,” we will be able to contribute to

RETREAT: Celebrating God's presence through the elements

In response to the Canadian Catholic Bishops' urging to adopt a contemplative response to creation, Notre Dame Sister Eileen Power and Kathy Murtha, along with Kate Marshall Flaherty, have designed a retreat entitled “Celebrating God's presence through images of air, earth, water, and fire.”

This interactive retreat incorporates scripture, symbols, media, poetry, reflection, prayer, ritual, movement, and contemplative silence. For the past four years, the retreat has been offered across Canada and at Scarborough's Mission Centre, as a day retreat for Religious and for Catholic teachers, as a six week series for parishes, or in a weekend retreat format.

For information and booking, contact Kathy Murtha at 416-261-7135, Ext. 215.
Email: kmurtha@scarbormissions.ca

the well-being of creation.

We are being challenged to shift our perspective of the Earth as a mechanical, inanimate object, there for our own individual consumption and material profit, to the Earth as a living, breathing being out of which we arose and draw our life, our very breath. We are fortunate to live in this exciting time of transition and promise. Today, scientists have joined their voices with holy mystics in all religious traditions who declare that the universe is not just outside of us, it is also within us.

Indigenous Peoples have long understood this profound and astonishing truth, which is brilliantly expressed as a Golden Rule by Chief Dan George: “We are as much alive as we keep the Earth alive.” Why? Because we are the Earth—the Earth made conscious. Human beings may have made a very recent entrance into the 13.7 billion year Story of the Universe, but as the Earth made conscious, our role is critical and awesome.∞

Kathy Murtha is a retreat facilitator and the coordinator of Scarborough's Mission Centre.

The Peruvian Andes, part of the world's longest mountain range that runs along the western coast of South America, extending across seven countries.

Perceiving God in nature

*Learning to hear, see, and experience God
in the midst of creation*

By Mark Hathaway

For eight years, I worked as a Scarboro lay missionary on the arid coast of Peru in the city of Chiclayo. Since it virtually never rained, the few trees in the poor *barrio* where I lived were always coated with a fine film of dust. In the winter, winds blew billowing clouds of fine sand down the streets and everything seemed to take on a rather drab, tan hue.

While the people were wonderful and I loved the time I lived in Chiclayo, I soon discovered that every few months I needed to go somewhere truly *green*. When I would re-encounter the full beauty of nature, often by travelling high up into the Andes, I felt as though a part of me that had been asleep would reawaken. I felt life in all its vitality again; my spirit was renewed and I felt more whole and at peace. Yes, I found God in the warm, loving people I lived among in Chiclayo, but I also experienced the Sacred in different ways in the wider world of nature.

Every creature is full of God

Meister Eckhart, the great Rhineland mystic, wrote that “every creature is full of God, and is a book about God. If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature, even a caterpillar, I would never have to prepare a sermon. So full of God is every creature.” Saint Francis, in his famous hymn, praises God through Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Air, Sister Water, Brother Fire, and Sister Earth, perceiving that the Creator is revealed through all the elements of nature. Martin Luther King also observed that, “God writes the Gospel, not in the Bible alone, but

on trees, flowers, clouds, and stars.” Certainly, this has been my own experience as well.

Jesus, too, seemed to have encountered God in the midst of nature. In the Gospels, whenever Jesus is praying he is out of doors, even at the moment of his greatest trial in Gethsemane. Jesus preached by the Sea of Galilee (I often picture him in this setting when I hear many Gospel passages) and used the examples of seeds, birds, and fermenting yeast in his parables. Even the language he spoke, Aramaic, is full of natural imagery. For example, the word translated as “good” also means to be fruitful or ripe.

For me, then, an authentically Christian spirituality involves learning to hear, see, and experience God in the midst of nature. How can we do this? How can we come to perceive the presence of God in all things? Can we learn to see all beings as conduits of the sacred, to see each being with its own unique dignity and wisdom, independ-

**“Every creature is full of God,
and is a book about God.
If I spent enough time with
the tiniest creature, even a
caterpillar, I would never have
to prepare a sermon. So full
of God is every creature.”**

*Meister Eckhart
Dominican monk and theologian
(1260-1328)*

Former Scarboro lay missionary Mark Hathaway, PhD candidate and course instructor at the University of Toronto, at the Toronto book launch for *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation*, a book he co-authored with Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff.

ent of how it might or might not be useful to us?

There are many ways to go about this, but one way that I have found helpful is to simply slow down, become more attentive, and open my senses so that I may see, hear, touch, smell, and taste my surroundings in a new way.

Reconnecting with nature

For me this involves reconnecting with nature, just as I needed to do in Peru. To do this I seek out a quiet place in as natural a setting as possible. As I walk I take time to become mindful of my footsteps, gradually beginning to breathe in time with my steps. I walk four steps on the in-breath and four on the out-breath (this breathing/walking rhythm can differ for each individual depending on whatever feels comfortable). I sometimes try to imagine that I am drawing the breath up through the soles of my feet and into my heart, and then returning the breath back down and out through my feet. This fosters



a sense of being grounded, of being rooted and connected to the Earth.

After a time, I try to find something that attracts me—a tree, a blade of grass, an insect, a squirrel—whatever captures my attention. I might spend some time just standing still, maintaining awareness of my breath. Then I try to become as open as possible to what my senses reveal to me, setting aside any previously held ideas or perceptions about this creature that I am encountering. I might ask myself: What is this creature saying to me? What is it trying to communicate to me, to teach me? What does it reveal to me? How is God speaking through this being? How is God present to me though this creature? I may even try to perceive the world from the perspective of whatever creature I am contemplating. How might it be to walk through the deep

valley of a tree's bark if I were an ant, or to feel myself caressed by the wind if I were a leaf? What vital purpose does this creature serve in the web of life?

Most of all I simply try to be with the other creature through a kind of loving mindfulness, treating it with reverence as a revelation of the Creator:

“a book about God.” I try to open myself, to be attentive, to allow myself to be touched and transformed by the other.

I find practices like these can begin to change our relationship both to God and to other creatures. We become more perceptive of the presence of God in all. At the same time, we learn a deep respect and reverence for all living things. We also come to see nature as much more than a mere resource to be exploited. We come to see that each being has its own unique beauty, dignity, and wisdom.

Whatever approach we use, endeavouring to truly perceive the Spirit of God in the midst of creation opens us to new ways of being and understanding. We widen our sense of compassion and learn to hear the word of God spoken through each and every creature. This may also open us to new forms of wisdom. Just as Jesus used examples from nature to teach through parables, we can open ourselves to the wisdom that God reveals in creation itself. Perhaps this wisdom can guide us as we seek out new ways to bring about a more ecologically sustainable, socially just, and spiritually fulfilling way to live in harmony with the other creatures who share this beautiful planet.∞



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